

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-02 CU-04 SY-05 USSS-00 SYE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 MCT-01 OPR-02 A-01 /078 W
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 6492

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PBOR, PN
SUBJECT: PROVINCES PREPARE FOR TREATY RALLY

REF: PANAMA 6313

SUMMARY: THE PROVINCIAL CAPITALS OF DAVID AND SANTIAGO ON SEPT. 5-7 SHOWED NO OUTWARD SIGNS THAT ANYTHING OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE, SUCH AS THE TREATY SIGNING, WAS TAKING PLACE THIS WEEK. REGIONAL UNIVERSITY CENTERS WERE DEVOID OF POSTERS OR SLOGANS EITHER FOR OR AGAINST THE TREATY. HOWEVER, THE CAMPAIGN TO ORGANIZE THE MASSIVE SEPT. 9 RALLY WELCOMING GEN. TORRIJOS BACK FROM WASHINGTON SEEMED WELL UNDER WAY AND REASONABLY WELL ORGANIZED. END SUMMARY.

1. A POLITICAL OFFICER VISITING THE CAPITALS OF CHIRIQUI AND VERAGUAS PROVINCES FOUND THEM QUIET ON THE EVE OF THE TREATY SIGNING (SEPT. 5-7). ALTHOUGH THERE WERE NO OUTWARD SIGNS OF TPS MAJOR EVENT, CONVERSATIONS WITH PEOPLE AT VARIOUS LEVELS OF SOCIETY SHOWED A DEFINITE INTEREST IN AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE TREATY AND REVEALED A VARIETY OF VIEWPOINTS ON IT. THE GOVERNOR OF CHIRIQUI SUMMED UP THE SITUATION:
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THE PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED NOT SO MUCH IN SPECIFIC ISSUES, SUCH AS THE PRESENCE OF U.S. MILITARY BASES, AS IN THE BASIC ISSUE OF U.S. CONTROL IN THE CANAL ZONE.

2. REGIONAL UNIVERSITY CENTERS SHOWED NO SIGNS OF STUDENT ACTIVISM REGARDING THE TREATY, BUT OFFICIALS OF THE CENTERS CLAIMED THAT THE STUDENTS DID SUPPORT

THE TREATY GENERALLY AND THAT MANY WERE GOING TO THE SEPT. 9 RALLY.

3. PLANS FOR TRANSPORTING MASSES OF PEOPLE TO PANAMA FOR THE RALLY WERE BEING MADE WITH APPARENT ENTHUSIASM. COMMITTEES WERE APPOINTED BY THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS TO HANDLE SUCH PROBLEMS AS ORGANIZING TRANSPORTATION AND PROVIDING FOOD. DEPARTURE TIMES FROM THE PROVINCS HAVE BEEN STAGGERED IN AN ATTEMPT TO KEEP THE TRAFFIC FLOWING SMOOTHLY, AND LOW SPEED LIMITS HAVE BEEN SET AS A SAFETY MEASURE. THE GOVERNOR OF CHIRIQUI STATED THAT BUS COMPANIES WERE PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION FREE OF CHARGE AND THAT DONATIONS IN THE THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS HAD BEEN RECEIVED TO PAY FOR FOOD.

4. AT FIRST, RESPONSES TO THE RALLY WERE NOT VERY FAVORABLE, BUT WHEN THE PEOPLE LEARNED THAT TRASNPOR- TATION AND FOOD WOULD BE PROVIDED, MORE WERE WILLING TO MAKE THE TRIP. REALIZING THAT THEY MORE OR LESS HAVE TO GO, PEOPLE SEEM TO BE OUT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE CHANCE TO TRAVEL TO THE CAPITAL, AND TO HAVE A GOOD TIME IN GENERAL. ACCORDING TO OFFICIALS IN CHIRIQUI, AS OF SEPT. 5, BETWEEN 27,000 AND 40,000 CHIRICANOS WOULD MAKE THE TRIP. OFFICIALS IN VERAGUAS EXPECTED TO SEND ABOUT 20,000 PEOPLE.

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5. OTHER PROVINCES, NOT VISITED, HAVE THEIR QUOTAS TO FILL. BUT THE BULK OF FRIDAY'S CROWD WILL PROBABLY COME FROM PANAMA CITY. ATTENDANCE BY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES WILL BE DE RIGUEUR; AND OFFICIALS HOPE FOR MANY NONOFFICIAL PARTICIPANTS AS WELL.

6. COMMENT: A MASSIVE RALLY OF THE PROPORTIONS INTENDED -- ORGANIZERS ARE TALKING ABOUT 250,000 -- WOULD NOT BE A SPONTANEOUS EVENT IN ANY COUNTRY. THOSE ORGANIZING THE PROVINCIAL PARTICIPATION IN THE RALLY, ALTHOUGH FULLY AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN SUCH A LARGE UNDERTAKING, WERE GOING ABOUT IT WITH ENTHUSIASM AND GOOD CHEER.

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